

I see that I am put down to speak on the subject of "How to use the P.N.E.U. programme" but that title does not express what I would like to say today. I am here to ask a few plain questions & to listen to the answers, but first I would like to thank Miss Gardner very warmly for giving us this opportunity to talk out some of the questions that have arisen -

I must now say that I - in common with so many others - owe a deep debt of gratitude to the P.N.E.U. Their programme has been of the very greatest assistance to us in our school. I have got much inspiration both as a mother & teacher from Miss Mason & her books. Therefore if I stand today in the nature of a critic, it is ^{as} an appreciative critic & one who loves the P.N.E.U. so much that I would fain it were more perfect than it is. I assume we are all agreed on the excellence of P.N.E.U. ideals & are loyal to them, so that we need not spend time today in discussing them. I don't believe we any of us really like criticism - we dislike it extremely - but the criticism of our friends & even of our enemies is the most valuable thing we can have - no system is perfect, & no system that were perfect today, even if that were possible - could be perfect three years hence & the only possibility of healthy growth is by attending closely to criticism. I do not mean that we are to be like the man & the boy

and the ass in the fable, who tried to alter their procedure for every suggestion that was made; but in every criticism there is usually a grain of truth & if we can appreciate this we shall make progress. Therefore we should listen to such criticism - weigh it - discuss it & if we find in the end it is worth acting on - then let us do so.

This then is my excuse for introducing the question of the criticism of the programme - & if my remarks seem abrupt, it is because I have so little time, & if they seem severe it will the better provoke discussion.

When the T.N.E.V. was first started it was, I believe, to supply to the Home Government a standard to which to work, that the hundreds of children being educated alone, or in small classes, should be trained on as good or better a system as children who were in schools. As the T.N.E.V. developed the idea of P.V. schools gradually developed also & many schools adopted the programme in some of the classes, & others were started to carry out the system throughout. Since then there has been a movement to spread the programme through the elementary schools. This involves a very much larger scheme than that originally intended. That one system should

be capable of being employed in all these different capacities speaks much for the breadth of thought on which it is based: but there is also a great danger, that ~~it~~ attempting too much it will fall to pieces and achieve little. It is because I feel this danger very sincerely that I wish to ask for a revision of some of the books in the programme, so that children who are passing on to the Public Schools & University will not be handicapped.

Children are more & more demanding the social advantages of the larger communities - schools are growing everywhere - we may conclude that the programme, as it stands, is meant for Schools & we shall not be met with the answer that it is merely for the home schoolroom.

We have ^{been} for the last 4½ years ~~been~~ through a great upheaval. We have seen the old world tottering down - we have tried to do our part during these years, but we realise that before us lies a greater work still, this work of reconstruction. We are but one little body of people trying to do "our bit" in the new fight - in the effort to make the world a better & a sweeter place. - Some one - I forget whose name has recently said - This ~~world~~ can only be done if you educate - educate - & again educate. We have no intention of arrogating to ourselves any grand position or the glory of a great mission. But in our small way if we

carry out our work conscientiously it will have a far-reaching effect. And we are not going to carry out that work well unless we are absolutely honest - unless we face facts & deal with them without flinching.

Now the questions I want to ask are: -

- (1) How many students who teach in private homes or schools carry through the Programme in its entirety?
 - (2) How many schools - so called P.U.S. - carry out the programme throughout the schools?
 - (3) If teachers do not carry out the programme altogether how nearly do they approximate to it?
 - (4) Do they when they work ever substitute regularly other books than those chosen?
 - (5) If so for what reason?
 - (6) Does the outside world - do the heads of schools to which our children go - find our scholars up to the average in all subjects of children who come from other schools.
 - (7) Do our children pass examinations satisfactorily?
- The P.N.S.U. has ^{now} been started long enough for us to be able to collect a mass of evidence on these subjects & it is our duty to collect such information & if we find it does not fit in with our preconceived opinions, to face that evidence squarely & act on it. As a beginning I will give some opinions I have formed on this subject, which have been ~~arrived at~~ ^{formed} the result

of our experience in a school during the last 14 years.

We have always adopted the P.U.S. programme, but we have never worked on it wholly - we have faithfully tried to carry it out, but we have not been able to do so in all subjects.

Miss Drury writes in "A Liberal Education", "Mathematics, Experimental Science, Grammar & Languages require oral lessons & are generally so well taught in schools that nothing need be said about them." In that one sentence she dismisses all the subjects which place a boy in a Public School. I am speaking especially for the boys & girls of the educated classes who have to pass on to the Public Schools & all of both sexes look forward to a career which will bring them a livelihood. Those of us who have these boys to start in life know that we must conform to the standards set for entrance examinations - yet we ourselves feel that the life in a preparatory P.N.S.U. school is best fitted to help a boy in that larger life because it gives a boy interests & pursuits which will employ his leisure & help him to keep up his interest in Literature, Science & Art. But I would like very much to know how many teachers have passed their boys straight into the Public Schools, or the Navy or the books set in the programme in the subjects I mentioned - In

French we use many of the translation books, but none of the Grammar ones - in Latin the same. Now if we require to use other books on these subjects, & others I believe do the same can there not be some revision of the books from time to time & suggestions taken from those engaged in teaching, & some books or curriculum agreed upon which would be advantageous. If we start with the assumption that "we have attained" & that nothing can be better - we shall fail. One by one people will fall off from the school as time goes on & work on their own systems & all will lose the immense advantages which corporate work & unity give, especially work inspired by such high ideals as those Miss Mason has given us.

Let us go down to details. In every subject there is a certain element of drudgery & no camouflage can hide it - It is the same in life - & if we are to prepare children for life we must make them face the drudgery manfully & with set teeth to conquer it. The joy of work will come later as they begin to feel the power of difficulties conquered & it is no good setting out to teach children & letting them think that all will be rosy & delightful, although in our teaching a very large portion of their lessons is a real joy to the children. This necessity for drudgery is particularly the case with French & Latin. There is a certain amount

of steady plot in the grammar which must be got through. The Seipmann series of French books are very ~~hard~~ difficult to teach with & very difficult to learn from - they lack clearness, simplicity & consecutive grammar - I speak with some years experience & I find it far better to begin with a simple old-fashioned grammar with simple sentences & gradually increasing in difficulty & at the same time simple French translation & plenty of French conversation. Our children have done really well on our French system - In Latin I think we can fairly borrow the books used at the best boy's preparatory schools where Latin is well taught & the children would have the advantage of having been taught on the same lines in these subjects as those with whom they are to compete.

The Mathematical books have more nearly approximated to those usually employed. There are details which we might modify after discussion - For instance, we always begin Algebra in II A which we find advantageous.

A free interchange of suggestions from teachers on the teaching of all these subjects would be useful. We must remember that what seems the best now may not be the best tomorrow - we must be prepared to improve our methods -

In Science we might also get help in systematising the curriculum. The books are many of them excellent - but we require the help of some scientific experts to draw up a scientific course for the school.

In History the programme has been of great assistance. The books used, when the programme started, were almost a discovery. They have been well graded & the whole well worked out. But there is one very important improvement which I should like to see - that is that the periods studied should be the same throughout the school. IA & IB could take the period in Our Island Story - II & III in Arnold Foster & so on. In this way children would learn consecutive history & as they pass up from one class to another there would be no hiatus in their knowledge. It would be invaluable in a school & the whole question whether schools can continue to work to the Programme hinges on this. Lectures on History, Architecture, Art could be given to the whole school & our literary evenings (like the Seal & the Tuesdays) could be shared in by much more profit by several classes & indeed the corporate life of the school would be strengthened in every way. You will all remember that delightful term before we went to Winchester. It was the best term's work we ever had because throughout the school we were working on the same

period. This synchronisation of work could be applied equally to Geography & to some extent to Scripture. With regard to Geography the subject requires complete revision. The Geography of the world is in so fluid a condition that all we can do is to watch for new books & read some of the literature that has recently appeared on this subject.

Citizenship also requires a new book. The old order changes yielding place to new so rapidly that many of our books are now antiquated.

The books on Literature are splendid but would be of double value if the periods were synchronised as I said.

In view of these facts - I ask for what in Court parlance would be called a Royal Commission to consider the books of the Programme & in especial I ask that the History Periods may be synchronised.

Resolutions asking for these two things were put during the Conference & carried nem. con.

Elizabeth Hickson.